

APPENDIX F

Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

Appendix F: Stakeholder Feedback Summary

- 3 Roundtables
 - Roundtable #1: 54 attendees on August 9, 2016 at TNOYS conference
 - Roundtable #2: 52 RSVPs, approximately 31 attendees on September 14, 2016 at a virtual roundtable via webinar (some attendees signed on late, others signed off early)
 - Roundtable #3: 33 attendees on September 22, 2016 at Texas Homeless Network /Texas Homeless Education Office conference

August 9th 2016 Kickoff/Pre-Institute @ TNOYS Conference

10am-4pm (lunch included)

Ending Youth Homelessness in Texas: *Youth Count Texas!* Findings, Recommendations, and Planning Together

With speakers from [TNOYS](#), [the University of Houston](#), and [Texas Appleseed](#)

Join us for an opportunity to focus on youth homelessness and give direct input on strategic recommendations to improve services and supports in Texas. This day-long, interactive session will include a presentation on findings from *Youth Count Texas!*, the first statewide study of youth experiencing homelessness in Texas that was conducted in 2015-2016 in collaboration with a network of service providers and leaders across the state. You will hear what the surveys revealed – the trends, experiences and issues faced by youth – as well as learn (and ask questions) about the legal rights of homeless youth as well as the responsibilities of providers who serve them. Most importantly, you will have the opportunity to learn about and contribute to policy recommendations and advocacy plans that could dramatically improve funding and programming for these vulnerable youth. Everyone with an interest in ending youth homelessness is invited – shelter staff, street outreach, school liaisons, CoC partners, community members, leaders, advocates, and more!

September 14th 2016 Virtual Roundtable (webinar) + September 22nd 2016 Roundtable/Workshop @ THN/THEO Conference

1.5 hours each

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Join us for an opportunity to focus on youth homelessness and give direct input on strategic recommendations to improve services and supports in Texas. This interactive virtual roundtable will include a presentation on findings from *Youth Count Texas!*, the first statewide study of youth experiencing homelessness in Texas that was conducted in 2015-2016 in collaboration with a network of service providers and leaders across the state. You will hear what the surveys revealed – the trends, experiences and issues faced by youth. Most importantly, you will have the

opportunity to learn about and contribute to policy recommendations and advocacy plans that could dramatically improve funding and programming for these vulnerable youth. Everyone with an interest in ending youth homelessness is invited – shelter staff, street outreach, school liaisons, CoC partners, community members, leaders, advocates, and more!

- Individual conversations and interviews were held with key stakeholders across the state as the project progressed. These conversations assisted in creating the provider survey (Appendix G) and in clarifying information gained through the stakeholder feedback session.

Roundtable #1 – Notes from discussion portions of the day

Discussion/Reflection Portion

A reflection on what has happened in this roundtable session up until now

- What have you heard so far that is interesting or exciting to you?
- Off the top of your head what do you remember about what ...
 - Christine presented/Youth Count Texas survey development and implementation
 - Multiple definitions of homelessness
 - The survey was supposed to be standardized but people did not follow them
 - Timeline was a challenge – not enough time
 - Despite the fact that schools are a good data pull they were hesitant in being a part of the data collection
 - Dr. Narendorf presenter/Youth Count Texas data and analysis
 - Some of the findings replicate Youth Count 2.0
 - The agencies where the data was pulled from were mainly on the east side of Texas. Are there agencies in the West? Or did they not want to participate?
 - Data can be skewed based on who is putting in the effort
 - Transportation as a need
 - Most challenging issues related to mental health
 - Drug/alcohol issues are surprisingly low compared to what we see in our workplace.
 - Most important findings?
 - Foster care
 - Prevention
 - Homogeneity on terms/definitions
 - Getting school to the table about homeless youth
 - Organization of this count with other counts
 - Legal Presentation (especially related to the services you provide)
 - Consent to services

What are your reactions to this information? What were the points that you could get passionate about working on?

- Found that the findings were consistent in their area. Dental health as a huge issue that could be also linked to self-esteem in youth.
- For mental health services youth often have to fight hard to even receive those services. Example: 4 or 5 sessions to get an assessment
- Challenge for providers try to figure out how to get on the same page on policies and laws so we can all be unified.
- NO IDs and having the right documents make it hard for youth.
- How do we get everybody to be consistent and put forth the same effort to get the right data?
- Biggest protective factors for youth aging out of foster care at least a state ID or Driver's license
- Future research on the intersection between trauma and homeless youth. Trauma focused services.

- It is very difficult to get a state I.D. in Texas, if you have parents, transportation, and money. I have teens and made 2-3 trips to DPS for each kid. How much more difficult must it be for homeless youth who have none of these? That affects employment, medical, housing, benefits, and transportation. Make it easier for homeless youth at DPS.
- Bringing the legal handbook with policies and legal rights to legislature
- Allow youth to voice their concerns at the capital
- Standardization in data collection across states
- More participation from the west side of Texas
- Importance of teaching life skills in schools (taxes, checkbooks, savings, health insurance, etc.)
- Consistent with findings in particular services available
 - Dental health
 - Limited services even if they are available
 - Less complicated mental health/ more accessible
 - Mental health issues in general/ stigma/ treatment
 - Availability of services
- Find out more information on drop in center data appears conflicting consistency
- Money, stigma bringing up big issues for mental health, education, foster care not focused
- Employment, driver's license the difficulty accessing these "simple" process when you're homeless
- Maybe we can set priorities for the highest risk group of kids
- How does the count address or differentiate the different categories of experiences such as those who've experienced CPS cases, domestic violence, shelters, aging out etc.
- Information was consistent with our services re: homeless youth
- The results of homeless youth were also very similar to the results of homeless adults re: issues faced, reasons for being homeless, etc.
- The consistency in definitions of homelessness in youth which is a confusing barrier to a quality study of youth homelessness
- We are curious about the data in the 3 studies by the 3 different sources of how data was gathered, definitions, and duplicative efforts or efforts to avoid duplication. Would like more research into "financial" reasons youth are homeless.
- Concerned LGBTQ data is low compared to national trends. Maybe some subset? If questions dig into this deeper?
- Foster youth in shelters have been counted in PIT counts and McKinney Vento as homeless until December 2017
- See barriers youth face-medical care getting I.D's etc.

What can we conclude about how our youth programs meet the needs of these young people?

What are the challenges based on your interpretation of the facts you have heard?

- Barrier: Young people passing criminal background checks and drug screens. Services while youth are staying under the radar.
- Need for additional safe housing alternatives. Some youth prefer to stay with friends or couch surfing as opposed to shelter. Is there way to come up with an alternative that is coming between the two? Mentioned host homes as an option. Also talked about group homes but group homes are starting to become moved away from. Concern for the legality of placements that can be suggested to students (concerned about her license) which can be a barrier to creativity
- Talked about the limitations of doing services that are needed. Also policies. How do we advocate for policies to change so we can care for them in the moment. Lack of

- housing. Don't have anywhere in the meantime for youth to go where they will be safe and secure while they are waiting for housing. Extending funding after youth extends care so we can stabilize them as they transition. Barrier to get IDs
- Need for vocational training program. Short term certification programs. So they won't be limited to minimum wage jobs. Schools provide psych exams to get them extra help. Parental consent.
 - Meeting the need adequately by staffing, trained staff, trauma informed staff to be able to be more open
 - Limitations on shelters for young kids. Teaching youth to understand how to look for resources
 - Better knowledge on what resources exist
 - More training centers
 - Expanding mentoring options where older people can be a network opportunity
 - Educating them on basic life skills
 - Need somebody in their life that pushes them in their life to learn life skills
 - Rapid rehousing
 - Not just housing but supportive services

Additional reflections:

- Barriers to employment
 - Getting documents (State I.D., Birth Certificate, Social Security Card)
 - Life skills (Interviewing, resume building, applications, dress appropriately, etc.)
- More housing for families and older adults
- Organizations specifically for youths
- What about services-long term housing for homeless youth under 18
- There are fewer funding sources for homeless youth beyond an emergency shelter time limit
- Legal ramifications for housing placements, medical care, etc. for youth 16-17 or below
- Fewer funding/legal support for care
- Allowing youth to make and learn from mistakes without jeopardizing stable housing
- Limitations: Youth who do not want to enter a shelter environment with rules. What about scattered site apartments? Or host homes for age 18 or lower? Or finding a relative.
- Additional safe housing alternatives (something between staying with a friend and entering a shelter)
 - Ex: host homes (process needs to be streamlined)
 - Possible informal placements
 - Group homes but moving away
- Concerns: Issues with workers concerned about protecting their license versus locating additional/creative placements for the homeless youth
- Barriers for homeless youth, unable to pass criminal background check, drug screen and get employment or housing
- System question: Could Juvenile probation get youth jobs while on parole?
- Find 17 year old when released from adult jail
- Existing program aren't setup to support couch surfing kids
- Kids who stay with non-relatives have even more problems accessing resources.
- They're starting with so many barriers while being treated as an adult

- Affordable housing is a huge issue for housing young people
- Can the kids get services during the period of time that they're on probation and already trying to stay off of the courts radar
- Homeless housing needs mentoring and more than first a place to live
- Policy where youth serving organizations must send annual numbers regarding how many homeless youth they served, services provided to them, agencies that may have referred them to, etc.

What are some decisions we can make for law and policy work?

- There are differences in practice, nothing consistent
- Policies in school where it is mandatory for life skills in the 9th grade
- Youth serving organizations and school have to report annually how many homeless youth they were serving
- Increase funding for sheltering and housing. Money can be diminished by decreasing emergency room court room courts by increasing funding (cost benefit analysis)
- No burden on the state to make sure this youth is not on the street
- No requirement for 17 and up coming out of jail to be released to a safe environment

If you had 100,000 how would you help homeless youth in your community?

- We would use the money to fund the development of a summer program youth
- 2 case managers that are highly trained
- More case managers
- Internship program where they would get job training and then placed into an internship
- Address more immediate needs
- Help foster youth that aged out of extended care
 - Transition Coach
- Provide grants for youth that want to start a project with adult guidance so they can be a voice and fix their own needs

Roundtable #2 –virtual/webinar transcript

Note: While we had strong interest and a good turnout, the audience was not very interactive except for a few people. The following are direct quotes from the discussion portions of the session.

“I am really interested in the steps taken by those school districts that were able to participate by either administering the survey at the school or making a referral to a community collaborator for survey participation. When addressing lessons learned, we might be able to identify the actual steps taken within a school district that supported this participation.”

“Great info...but my burning statement [need for homeless youth] is that colleges should be included in the required to appoint a Homeless Liaison.”

“There are obvious challenges to working together regarding a youth count when we work with differently nuanced definitions, however, I think some lessons learned and areas to highlight would be lessons learned about areas where we have more similarities than differences, and identify points at which we can come together in effective collaborations.”

“Legislation was passed last year for foster liaisons at colleges. There are groups working to get homeless liaisons added to this.”

“The mental health needs rising to the top is interesting in that we usually hear more about the need for housing, transportation, and acquiring basic needs.”

“Perhaps being able to share data between the PEIMS and HMIS systems would improve data. I know of two school districts and Cities that are doing this, Waco and Alief.”

“Sheltered youth or youth receiving services through CoC are captured through HMIS but unsheltered youth or those youth not receiving services through CoC are not captured on a data source. Is it possible for Texas Transition Centers to have access to HMIS”

“Locally, we need to include DFPS and JPD in CoC planning committees and part of the local CoC strategic plan”

“There is no formal system to assess and identify mental health needs on the college level. They are required to self-identify. I am the Foster Care Liaison and I have a question on an intake form asking if they were receiving services in high school. They don't know how to ask for what they may need.”

“We had approached our local housing authority at one time regarding housing vouchers for homeless youth particularly those aging out of foster care. Unfortunately the message we received from the housing authority was that they only want youth who were capable of earning income and

having short occupancy in housing authority programs. In other words they did not want to help those youth with the biggest challenges.”

“I did want to mention the issue of unaccompanied homeless youth being able to access services such as housing, medical and mental health services, other programs and services without parent signature or consent.”

Roundtable #3 – notes from discussion portions of the workshop

What is the biggest need you see for homeless youth?

- Access to community resources
- Mentors, navigators
- Texas needs to prioritize resources for CPS and COPS needs to support foster families
- Legal assistance – including emancipation from parental rights
- Mobile services
- Trade schools to participate more
- Parenting/ending relations/advocating
- The biggest need related to youth homelessness is affordable housing for families – for an unaccompanied youth, it's housing and an advocate to help them get to school and get/earn their diploma, make sure students take vocational training
- Finding them and verifying they are homeless (estimates never match actual numbers)
- Identification (ID cards, etc.)
- How to recruit
- Connection to a caring adult – an adult that cares enough to help them find housing, healthcare, MH care, and plan a future path to success (case management?)
- Housing
- Affordable 2nd chance housing
- Relationships
- Safe, family-style homes that create an environment where youth thrive, especially 15-17 year olds
- Birth certificates, IDs, SS cards
- Transportation to credit recovery or alternative schools
- Prevention – if we can stop it from happening by intervening in at risk students' lives, we can change people's trajectory
- I think the biggest need would be placement; stable placement that fits child's needs
- Homeless prevention by providing permanent connections
- Cut red tape to programs and services, remove technicality barriers.
- All of the above!

How can we address some of the issues/challenges in serving homeless youth or in youth counts?

- Emancipation from parental rights – students that need IDs, services, etc. (barrier to accessing services)
- Mobile services to provide IDs and other services to kids without transportation (all-inclusive services)
- To implement trade schools and more trade classes in high schools – dual classes, like in college, but earlier age before they graduate and become homeless (can go straight into employment)
- Furniture! When you finally move out of a hotel and get that apartment, you need a bed to get a good night's sleep and not a stained, 3rd hand couch. We have families that move out of lowest hotels or horse trailers into an apartment. They need basic pieces of furniture – we want people to get a good night's sleep to come to school the next day. (Limited private efforts, like Ashley Furniture). Let furniture be an allowable expenses with homeless services funding. Basic needs, not furnishing the whole place.
- Transportation from school district to credit recovery locations & alternative schools.
- Access to shelter and places to stay (15-17 year olds) + programming (driver's education, getting IDs, etc.)
- Big challenge: In my community, case workers are not necessarily aware that they're working with youth (lack of youth friendliness) and instead approach youth as they would adults. Youth probably have never had an apartment before, etc. – and might need more hand holding and more leniency. They might be afraid.
- Resilience of young people – they know how to be hidden, traditional way we count homeless adults won't work – understand that. Youth engagement. "Masters of disguise"
- Veteran initiative successful – teams specifically trained to work with vets. Need same type of approach for youth. Youth have different best practices.
- Legislature could have a weighted ADA for homeless kids (way they do for pregnant & parenting youth); that means additional funds for special populations & career/technology courses get additional funding.
- Getting higher education institutions involved – in roundtable discussions. Like community colleges and how they can help transition youth to adulthood. + Community colleges come into school districts (events, etc.) to bridge gap

Feedback on 5 Preliminary Recommendations/Broad Topic Areas

1. Improve Data Sources for Counting and Identifying Needs of Homeless Youth
2. Target Needs of Youth in Foster Care and Juvenile Justice
3. Provide a Full Continuum of Supports to Promote Housing Stability
4. Increase Service Delivery and Supports to Youth Identified Through Schools
5. Remove Barriers to Higher Education and Employment

Participants chose to focus on #1 & #3

#1 DATA

- The only way to get anything funded and supported is through data – we need better data! Numbers speak.

- I loved the YCT surveys, but we only had 1-5 days to do it – need a 6 month timeframe to administer it.
- Have YCT coincide with school counts, PIT counts, etc. – to avoid duplication
- Find other ways to collect data efficiently. Phone surveys? In person surveys was the hardest, one on one.
- Weight on school districts – requirements from the state level
- YBRS data collection in schools – it has a few questions on homelessness; how get that data – overlap. Use data from this survey (whole school gets it). Broader perspective. Already approved by TEA and others. Can TEA promote?
- What if the legislature/state authorized schools to give the survey without parent permission, we'll get a wealth of data

#3 FULL CONTINUUM SUPPORTS FOR HOUSING STABILITY

- Do it! Youth need a lot of support – but how exactly would you do it?
- Assessing youth on a youth scale, not on an adult scale
- Youth engagement - capacity for agencies working with youth & targeting homelessness
- **State has an obligation to kids in care that they do not become homeless when exiting foster care. Not ok. More support focused on CPS and foster care families. No support! Rough going. Foster care system a major area of focus. We watch this daily – foster kids bound to be homeless. (Problems within foster care training, reporting, licensing) + burn out for CPS workers
- Can't put all the burden on CPS. Community entitles working in partnership.
- Vast majority of kids exiting care go back to bio families, breaks down
- Programming available to youth in foster care – PAL, transitional supportive housing – can this be available to all homeless youth as well? More capacity.

Group did not fully discuss all recommendations (ran out of time), but did focus in on the ones they found most relevant – and discussed some larger issues/considerations.

Stakeholders consulted by Sarah Narendorf, UH GCSW and Christine Gendron, TNOYS Executive Director during Phase 3 of *Youth Count Texas!* (These informal conversations or interviews were completed outside of the roundtables.)

Conducted August-October 2016

Purpose:

To inform program inventory, offer insights into the needs of homeless youth/services for homeless youth, and formulate recommendations to address identified needs

Madeline Reedy, City Square Transition Resource Action Center
Dr. Ashley Lind, Promise House
Natalie Metzger-Smit, LifeWorks
Erin Whelan, LifeWorks
Dr. Liz Schoenfeld, LifeWorks
Robert Brewer, Harris County Protective Services
John Bracken, Montgomery County Community Youth Services
Kellie Stallings, Connections Individual and Family Services
Julie Strentzsch, Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives
Bill Wilkinson, Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives
Rachel Faz, Catholic Charities of Lubbock
Eva Thibaudeau, Houston Coalition for the Homeless
Melissa Opheim, ACH Child and Family Services
Darla Bardine, National Network for Youth
Eric Masten, National Network for Youth
Andrea Sparks, Texas Office of Governor Greg Abbott
Brooke Boston, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
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Jeanne Stamp, Texas Housing Education Office
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Debra Reyna, Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
Charles Rotramel, Houston reVision
Mary Green, Houston Alumni Youth Center, Harris County Protective Services
Katrina Griffith, CPC Family Court Judge, Harris County
Katya Dow, University of Houston Law School

TNOYS also interviewed 107 youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in Houston, Dallas and Central Texas in partnership with Texas Appleseed.